

Depot Town Rag

Volume 17, Number 11 "All the news in one block in one month."

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

100% FREE
Rag Content
November 1994

- Proprietariness pays off
 - Death Trip part V
 - PRETENTIONS!
 - Graffiti traced
 - November No-nos!
- and other strictly local stuff. . .

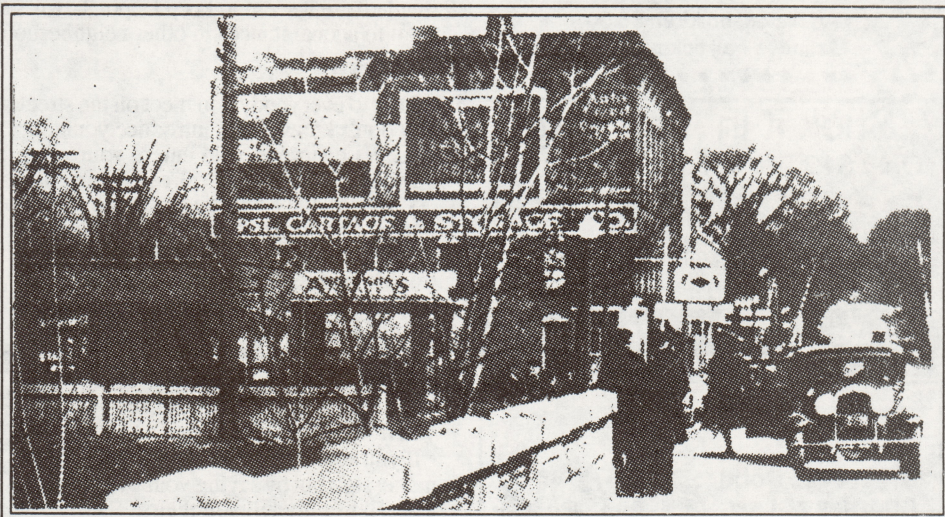
Caboose Cop Shop adds security here

Beryl Curry will soon be maintaining a police substation in the more than 100-year old DTA caboose as work continues to make that space available 100% of the time for that activity. Dave Blackmer, Dave French, DTA president Tom Steele, and DTA's attorney will negotiate the switch-over of the activities there this month.

After a 5th Ward citizens' meeting in the EMU Center and then a showing at the October DTA meeting, Chief of Police, L.J. McKeown said, "Here we have the opportunity to make the program work the way it's supposed to work ... because the people *wanted* the police here ... You don't get that kind of cooperation in very distressed neighborhoods..." The Chief predicted success for Depot Town's community police station, "because *you're* willing to get involved!"

Phones, computers, carpeting, and new chairs will soon be set for a grand opening here, and a patrol car will be parked nearby.

5th Ward Councilmember Terry McDonald facilitated the negotiations last month.



"Good Old Days" had problems to be solved, too

Casual observers of this kind of old photo may bask in sentimentality as they examine the old cars along Cross Street and the original advertisements painted on the west wall of the Follett House - but don't fall into the Good Old Days mentality. The above photo is from a police investigation of a murder that happened in 1935. The victim lived in the house on the northeast corner of Huron and Cross and his body was found under the year-old foot bridge to Frog Island.

Gang graffiti and overdue tickets: Any connections here?

Perhaps old neighborhood ethics can lead the way to a solution

Ypsilanti seems to be so much like Big City Chicago when it comes to dirty politics and now, with the recent emphasis on public misbehavior, it seems we're still trying to emulate folks in those harder urban areas.

Last month saw testimony at meetings of our board of education indicating there were more than ten organized 'gangs' operating in and around the high school and that doesn't include the Future Teachers Club, the football team, or the crossing guard's union. Statements from the police department indicate *they* didn't start the gangs and *they* don't intend to stop them, either.

Another recent broadside from the Cop Shop indicates they've been soft on other kinds of crime, as well. In a statement to City Council they indicate they're going to begin a 'crackdown' on overdue parking tickets. Some folks are collecting them like baseball cards, the *News/Press* speculates.

All this reminds us of a story we heard while visiting Moscow, the capitol of pre-capitalist Russia a few years before the fall. "Why is there so little crime here?" we asked, when we noted folks walking around the city districts late at night. The interpreter replied quickly. "Oh, it's not permitted!"

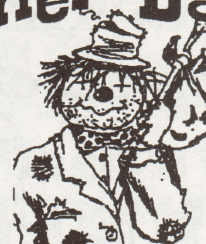
What a good idea.

Here in Ypsilanti, one highly visible citizen warns us that washing off graffiti may result in gang 'retaliation.' Meanwhile, most cars continue to travel by at twenty miles over the posted speed limit and traffic zooms around blinking school busses while children try to cross the street. Organizers of next year's National Night Out still are not planning to extend this one night of citizen proprietariness to a weekend, week, or month. Too bad. In the absence of such private citizen involvement in public spaces, someone else seems to have stepped in to claim ownership of many neighborhoods.

[See suggestions overleaf . . .]

The Depot Town Merchants
present a

HOBO Dinner Dance



Saturday, November 5, 1994
at the Freighthouse
7:00 P.M. until midnight

"A Peek Into The Mystery of Hobo History"
- Peter B. Fletcher

Hobo or Country attire appreciated
Square Dancing • Line Dancing
Other entertainment

\$12 advance from Merchants
\$15 at the door

The Ypsilanti Players
present

Once Upon A Mattress

8 p.m. November 11 & 12, 18 & 19

2:30 p.m. November 13 & 20

St. Luke's Episcopal Church
120 North Huron Street

Tickets: Carty's Music or 483-1724

Adults \$8, children \$6.50

Matinees - all tickets \$6.50

Stick it in *The Rag*

Only \$12 per col. in. per month.

You can't get any more local than this!
Send your copy to *The Old Caboose*
by the 3rd Thursday and you'll see
your ad here the following month.

Many payment plans. Trust us.

The Depot Town Rag:

All the news in one block in one month

Gregory L. Dodd
Attorney at Law



- Family Law
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300 N. Huron, Ypsilanti MI 48197
313-487-2611

James MacDonald's Antiques

29 East Cross • 481-0555

Apple Annie's Vintage Clothing

Ypsilanti's FARMERS' MARKET

Wednesdays and Saturdays
Open all year in the freighthouse
For information: 483-1480

Proprietariness pays off down here

Some simple rules for making more loving urban spaces:

Perhaps it is because Depot Town is only one block long any way you want to measure it, but it seems like a controllable plot of urban space to most of its inhabitants - and we wonder why our peaceful success plan is not replicated in every other block in the world. Three years ago two hoodlums kicked in a lot of store windows and they are now known by their names - which were printed on the monthly checks they had to send to the building owners. On another occasion, some bad boys kicked over the pole-mounted wastebaskets and an antique shop owner held them in his store until the police arrived. By that time, they knew each other well enough to work out a repatriation deal without the aid of Jimmy Carter. Still another much-publicized event was the theft of the World's Largest Moosehead which was returned in the St. Paddy's Parade amid much hoopla and celebration. All these lemons were turned into lemonade - and it could happen elsewhere.

Hoping to see some Good Old Fashioned Depot Town Practicality in more places than at the crux of East Cross and North River streets, an attempt is made to codify some heretofore unwritten standards that seem to keep Depot Town's streets safe. Locals are encouraged to clip and send them to acquaintances in other neighborhoods. We may be on to something down here . . .

Walking:

- Talk to everybody you meet on the street. If you don't know them, introduce yourself.
- Greet everyone who enters your place of business. If they aren't already your customers, maybe they will be when they see how interested you are in them.
- When you see someone having trouble parking their car, offer to help them.
- Talk louder when you're conversing outdoors. Shout 'hellos' across the street. Wave at people you think you know. Smile more often when you're walking.
- If you don't remember someone's name, start out by saying your own. They'll usually tell you theirs.
- If that doesn't work, confess to them that they have you at a disadvantage and ask them to share names with you.
- Get to know the neighborhood kids by name. Tell them you know their Momma. Then call her and introduce yourself and tell her what nice kids she has.
- Hold on to people when you're talking to them. Get real close. Try not to block the sidewalk or exits. Stand even closer.
- Make your rituals even more so. If you are a weekly visitor, make a big deal out of each weekly greeting to the 'regulars.'



A new breed
of pit bull

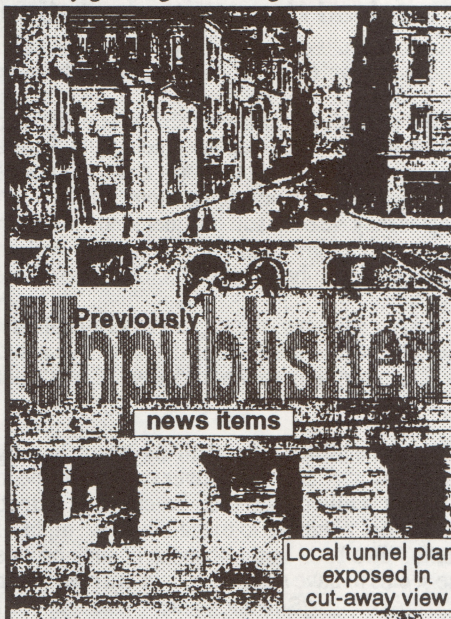
Driving:

- Park in a different place every time you arrive in this district.
- Set your speed control to go *exactly* the speed limit and notice how much easier it is to wave at others as they pass you.
- Make eye contact at stop lights and smile like you think you know the other drivers.
- Set your radio to stations that will calm and soothe your mood. Drive with the music. Keep the volume down low enough that anyone in the back seat will have to ask you to turn it up if they want to hear it, too.
- Sing along - even with the songs you don't know.
- Take the bus and ask directions of everyone you meet.
- Act like you're new in town and ask directions to your own neighborhood.

Sitting:

- When you're waiting to order in a restaurant, ask the folks at the next table what they're eating and if they'd recommend it.
 - When the waitperson says, "Hi, I'm Debbie! I'm happy to serve you!!!" use this opportunity to introduce yourself - and let Debbie know how happy you are to have her undivided attention.
 - Ask to see the owner. It's better to pay a compliment than file a complaint. You'll think of something.
- Such proprietary behaviors will soon give others the impression that you 'own the place' and, pretty soon, you will feel that you do!
- Remember that pack of tail-wagging beagles we knew as kids? They barked at everything that came into their line of vision. They actually thought they owned everything they could see.

We all need to act more like beagles.





Hon's Flowers

46 East Cross
482-2124



Dateline: Depot Town

Historical update on "Seven local wonders"

Harold W. Sherman of Pine View Drive remembers "what you currently call Depot Town was formerly called 'Dutch Town' [in the 1930s and '40s] but I have no idea where the name originated."

"Frog Island - At one time there was a canal along the east side making it a true island. The canal was gradually filled in."

"Willow Run ... was and is a small stream west of the former bomber plant (GM) and was not paved over for the airport..."

Rice Milk featured at Co-op

Dairy-free, lactose-free, and cholesterol-free Rice Milks will be sampled at the Ypsilanti Food Co-op. Eden Rice and Eden Blend (rice & soy) will be featured to taste, as well as custard and carrot cake made with these rice beverages.

These Rice Milks are naturally sweet and are made from organic brown rice. They are low in fat, just three grams per serving and can be used in place of milk in practically any recipe; great for people with an intolerance or allergy to dairy products.

Come to the Co-op and try some.

Orientation open to all

An Orientation will be held at the Ypsilanti Food Co-op on Saturday; November 12, at 2 P.M. Anyone is welcome to attend to learn about the co-op, what a co-op is, how to join, what products we carry and procedures for shopping at the Co-op.

The Ypsilanti Food Co-op is located at 312 North River Street, in Historic Depot Town. For more information, call 483-1520.

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Summer Hours: Tues - Thur 10-7,
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Visit our beautiful handpainted garden room ... for area's largest selection of handcrafted birdhouses, bird feeders, garden angels, fairies, garden hats, crows and sunflowers.

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24 November 1874

On Monday last Dr. E.H. Drake, of Detroit, a physician of eminence, not only of local, but of state and national reputation, left his home in usual health, and rather more than usual exuberance of spirit, in order to visit our city, taking the 7 a.m. train. He was invited to consult with Dr. S.W. Pattison. Re-

turning from visiting the patient, just opposite the round house, conversing intently upon the diagnosis of the case, the whistle of a coming train was heard. Dr. Drake said, "Doctor, is not that my train?" (It was the Detroit, due here about 10 a.m.) Dr. P. replied, "I think it is." Dr. Drake, as is usual with people who see a train coming that they are to take, was in an evident hurry, and exclaiming, "Doctor, I will see you again, (language doubtless prophetic now in a religious sense) quickly passed to the other side of the north track. There are four tracks here, and they were walking in the interval between the middle and the north track. As this track bows around so as to pass on the north side of the depot, he evidently supposed that it was a side one, and feeling perfectly safe, walked hurriedly along just inside the north rail. The engineer discovered him just in time to whistle down the tracks and give the alarm. The doctor turned his head to see what was the matter, when the cow-catcher struck him and hurled him with such force, striking head foremost against the pusher, or iron projection of the engine, as to crush in the skull. His side was injured, and his hand broken and nearly cut off next to the wrist. He never knew what hurt him. It was instantaneous death. If he had remained with Dr. Pattison between the tracks, he would have been safe, and would have had ample time to have reached the depot in season. Dr. Pattison being an elderly man, he thought it necessary to hasten along faster than he well could, and crossed to the north side as a matter of safety, as well as to shorten the distance. This is one supposition. Another is, that looking back he saw the train apparently coming right along their track; (and this is certainly the appearance to persons standing where they did) and as danger flashed upon his mind he sprang into a place of safety, but really the jaws of destruction. In this case he expected Dr. Pattison to follow him. He was conscious of safety where he was, and was surprised at Dr. Drake's movements. Supposing that he was safe on the other side of the train, he ran along to bid him good bye, when a boy spoke to him, "A man is killed." Turning around, there lay the mangled form of him who only a moment before was walking by his side. It is not surprising that Dr. D. took the inside track, as it bows around so as to leave but little room outside; and he no doubt supposed that it was a side track, his mind also being intent on reaching the depot in season. He was then taken to Dr. Pattison's residence, and a coroner's inquest was held, exonerating every part of blame. The friends were telegraphed to come out on the 3 o'clock train. On the half past four o'clock train he was taken back a

James
Thomas
Mann's

Depot Town Death Trip from early accounts in The Ypsilanti Commercial Part V

corpse. Such is life. In a moment when we think not "the son of man cometh." In this case the Scripture truly applies, "one was taken and the other left." His old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Elaible, hearing of the doctor's death, hastened to render assistance and suitably prepare the body for the sight of friends. The doctor was 53 years old the day he

died. His wife was visiting the family of Congressman Willard, at Battle Creek, having been in ill health. His children, two sons and a daughter, were anticipating a reunion on that evening around the home altar. The kind, generous husband and affectionate father was in that circle inanimate and speechless, taken away, not by protracted disease, but suddenly, like a clap of thunder from a cloudless sky. "Mysterious are the ways of God, and past finding out." The doctor had a host of friends in Detroit, and the flags were placed at half mast on public buildings, and many private residences were draped in mourning.

Saturday morning, 12 June 1875

- Local Matters

Yesterday about noon Mr. James Forwyth's horse, which was standing near the depot, hitched to a buggy, became frightened by the cars, and started up Cross Street on a run. On the bridge it collided with a lumber wagon and broke loose from the buggy. The horse went two miles further on the Ann Arbor road. The buggy sustained considerable damage.

25 January 1879 - Rail Road Crossings

The rail road crossings in this city are constant sources of danger to life and limb. At the depot high buildings shut off all sight of coming trains and the escapes from accident are many and narrow. Any one who drives across the track at the point mentioned knows the anxiety he feels until he is safely on the other side. The usual danger is frequently increased to add excitement to the life of the engineers and firemen, who often whistle for the sole purpose of scaring horses. Now, there is no reason whatever why the people of Ypsilanti should be thus put in jeopardy of their lives. Section 126, of the Charter of the City of Ypsilanti reads as follows:

"Sec. 126. The council shall have power to provide for any change the location and grade of street crossings of any railroad track, and to compel any railroad company to construct street crossings and bridges in such manner, and with such protection to persons crossing thereat as the council may require, and to keep them in repair; also to require and compel railroad companies to keep flagmen or watchmen at all railroad crossings of streets, and to give warning of the approach and passage of trains thereat, and to light such crossing during the night."

Let the Common Council take the matter in hand and see that the crossings on Cross street and Forest avenue are provided with swinging guards. There is no excuse for the existing state of affairs.

Depot Town Association, Inc.

20 October 1994

Minutes of September approved as published.

Reg: Will continue to be published by a unanimous vote. Increase in advertising rates approved.

Market Advisory Board: Dave French reports an approved rate increase for vendors. Cooler situation still ongoing.

DDA: A budget committee has been organized to evaluate cash expenditures. 90% of the \$14,700 annual budget will be earmarked for major projects. Remaining 10% of funds to be used for projects such as area beautification. Carol Kovalak is to consider office or retail space in the depot. Paul Feters will resign as chair of DDA after years of service. New chair to be voted in at next meeting (11/12). Thanks for your hard work, Paul!

Events: Carolyn McKeever is chair for this year's Festival of Lights. Volunteers from merchants and area supporters needed to greet visitors and count them. Councilmember Terry McDonald is scheduling time slots which need to be filled.

Great Train Race: Ann Arbor Track Club to take over organization of race. \$1 per runner to go to DTA. Unanimous vote by DTA to sponsor Track Club in Heritage Festival.

Caboose: Pending outcome of meeting with City Manager, the caboose will be used exclusively by the Ypsilanti Police Department. Tom Steele, Gregory Dodd, Dave French, and Dave Blackmer to meet with Ypsilanti Chief of Police, L.J. McKeown and City Manager to work out details of occupancy.

Merchants seek to know the mystery of hobo history and you can, too. A Hobo Dinner and Square dancing event will be held at the freight house Saturday, Nov. 5 beginning at 7 p.m. Advance tickets may be purchased from Depot Town merchants for \$12. \$15 at the door.

Gaelic League: The St. Patrick's Day Parade is planned for a Friday. More to follow.

Frog Island: The Ark plans to continue music at Frog Island with a change in format. Proposed: Friday Cajun, Saturday County (day) Blues (night), Sunday International

DTA: Firmly rooted in the past - with a clear view forward!



(variety).DBAs still tabled.

Checking Account to be changed to DTA members First of America.

Fourth of July: Linda French and Tom Steele volunteer to see if parade route can once again include Cross Street.

Bylaws committee to report on findings in the near future.

DTA agenda: To add to agenda for next meeting (11/17 at 7:30 p.m. Renewed Interest Antiques) have them to Tom Steele by November 11.

Victorian Holidays: Nothing to report.

New Year's Jubilee: Nothing to report at this time.

Best Yet: To Mr. Robert Blackmer who unfailingly greets everyone in Depot Town and helps us keep our best foot forward by keeping the area free of litter.

Golden Goose: To those who vandalized two benches in the Plaza and dumped trash cans into the river.

Turning on the holidays

Join your neighbors as hosts and greeters at the Festival of Lights in Riverside Park this month and next. Four to six people are needed for two three-hour shifts each night from November 20 through December 31.

DTA members will staff the gate on Christmas Eve and business sponsors on other nights include Sidetrack Grill, Miller's Ice Cream Parlor, Depot Town Travel, and the Daily Grind.

Call Councilmember Terry McDonald (483-2164) to volunteer for a shift of old fashioned Ypsilanti hospitality.

Guarantee

Your support makes a difference!



Join now!

Please include me among the members of

The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

I'm available to help with Association projects. Call me at _____

Annual dues:

- o \$25 Regular Voting Member (Property or business owner)
- o \$10 Associate Member (Interested in and supportive)
- o \$100 Life Member (A great deal if you had joined in 1976!)
- o Please place my name on the monthly mailing list of *The Depot Town Rag*
- o Don't mail *The Rag*. I'll pick it up in the neighborhood.
- o Clip and send check to "Depot Town Association"

c/o The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198



November 1994

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

• Hobo Dinner Dance

7 p.m. - midnight, Saturday, 5th

• Depot Town Association

7:30 p.m., Thursday, 17th
Renewed Interest Antiques

• Festival of Lights

November 20 - December 31

• Antique Engine Club

7:30 pm Thursday, 24th
at the Freight House Coffeeshop

• Victorian Holiday

December 2 & 3

• New Year Jubilee

December 31

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate. -Tom Dodd, editor

The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Tom Steele, president

c/o The Old Caboose

400 Market Place

Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

"Let's Give Thanks"

Happy Thanksgiving

from

Hansen's

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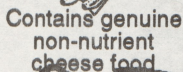
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"Hmmm.
Needs more
artifice!"

A2 is often compared to others places, like other towns, or similar to other locales. Call our county seat Harvard of the Midwest, Athens of the Cornfields, or Berkley of the East, Ann Arbor suffers from having no image of itself, only of others. Even its eateries are distinctly Somewhere Else: a New York-style delicatessen, a southern-style restaurant, an up-North lumber camp type of joint, or multi-cultural, multi-ethnic fare that nobly speaks of its origins in other places - nothing distinctly Ann Arbor. Everett's is gone. So are the Round Table and Stadium Tavern. Even a few downtown saloons have been redone into a trendiness of Old-Time Comfort Of Another Era. Too often Ann's Arbor is compared to Columbus, Ohio, a town that at least harbors a concept of self. No wonder Real Ypsi has been 'discovered' from the West and few of the media restaurant reviewers understand.

With Health Department approval, there could be faux food, too, but it would have to follow the 'Let's Pretend' theme. Fakery is the main course with mock turtle soup as the appetizer. The clam chowder can be Manhattan, New England, or any place else, for that matter. The *entree* (that's French, sort of!) is 'City Chicken', a concoction of non-chicken parts including pork or something and a broad offering of turkey presented as turkey-dogs, turkey-ham, turkey-meatballs, and maybe even turkey-fish cakes. Non-alcoholic beer and Shirley Temples are on the drink menu; dessert is that phony apple pie made from Ritz crackers. Don't order the cheesecake; it's not like anything you've had in New York or Nebraska!

This artificial ambience is further carried out by waitpersons in costumes, all pretending to be something or someone they aren't. Masks are optional for the customers, as well. Dinner theater might thrive here, too, since actors are just liars, anyway. "Look! There's Madonna! Isn't that Albert Einstein she's with? Here comes Minnie Mouse with Lassie!"

At least we'd have one place in the district where we could holler, "Waiter! May we have a *phony* at our table?!"

Until such fantasies happen in Depot Town, we'll continue with such events as this month's Hobo Dinner Dance. It's more our style, anyway. *That we can fake!* 7 P.M. until midnight, Saturday, November 5, in the Frighthouse. Tickets are \$12 in advance from Depot Town merchants, \$15 at the door. Peter B. Fletcher is the guest speaker/entertainer - and that's always a delight! Hobo or Country attire will be appropriate and there will be *square* and *line* dancing.

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If there's been gang 'tagging' in Ypsi's railroad district, property owners have been quick to cover it up. New paint jobs are a common occurrence, and any defacing of walls may be seen as a good excuse to apply a fresh coat. Only the depot and the Thompson Block across the street bear the signs of neglect that signify a wall waiting for someone to make their mark.

Still, the original version of street folk art - long before the movie "American Graffiti" which glorified the 1950s - started in railroad towns of the Great Depression. Bums, tramps, and hoboes scratched (scraffito) and drew (graffito) their symbols onto doors, fence posts, billboards, and curbs to denote good food, easy handouts, unsafe water, and directions to the local hobo jungle (campsite).

Today's bums practice the anonymity of The Guy Who Used To Be Named Prince and spraypaint limited expressions to claim territories of gandom of America's cities and suburbs. Most tagging is akin to male dogs urinating on the limits of a perceived boundary of authority. Color of kerchief, oversize clothing, and pants that hang down like a baby with a seat-full are the uniforms of the newest teen 'wannabees' who say, "I want to be an individual - just like everybody else."

Today's tots aspire to be recognized as hoods, and hoodlets. One night of television viewing will explain: the bad guys continue to be so much more glamorous than the good guys. Even our sanctified sports teams are lovingly called "The Bad Boys."

Age seems to have everything to do with it - Sage psychologists suggest that, if we just wait long enough, they'll grow out of it. Most of us did. Almost.

Artists have been painting walls for a long time and they seem to have a licence to continue 'child-like' behavior into 'adult-hood.'

Although Depot Town never got *chi chi* enough to be called an 'art colony,' our resident painters have a long history of getting murals and other enormous two-dimensional works up onto walls both public and private as means of personal self expression. Professor Malarkey's *Kidsart* program worked out of the caboose for several years, but those kids all have kids of their own by now.

Why it's fun to be a grown up...



...You can write on the walls!

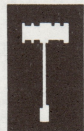
DTA, page 5 , November 1994

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No comfortable feel
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No shade,
no shine,
no butterflies,
no bees.
No fruits,
no flowers,
no leaves.
No birds,
November!

What happens to all those folks who planted the flowers and sat in the sun and waved from the sidewalk cafés all summer? Where have they gone, now that fall/winter is finally upon us? Have they retired to a Florida trailer park?

Not a chance! They've just moved to a seat in the window. They've moved their concerts in the park to concerts in the Freighthouse and at the coffeehouses in the block. They're upstairs in their studios getting their art ready for next year's showings, and they're meeting in the caboose to plan the next neighborhood event.

And all those events are not for the sunny months, either. The Festival of Lights will blaze away in Riverside Park from Thanksgiving until the New Year Jubilee closes the giant outdoor event. Yes, Depot Towners will be accustomed to the cold enough by the end of the month to switch their closets to mittens and hats and scarves and take to the streets again.

By the time the Victorian Holiday rolls around, all the locals will be on the streets - acting just like they did in the summertime - only they'll be dressed in layers of Victoriana from Grandma and Grandpa's closets.

Pretty soon, it'll be time for June's Frog Island Festival again and we'll be amazed that the winter has passed. Before you know it, we'll be hustling history with the Yester Festers.

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